

Collaboration in studying school-based teacher teams

Sustaining engaged teacher leaders: A needs assessment

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INTRODUCTION

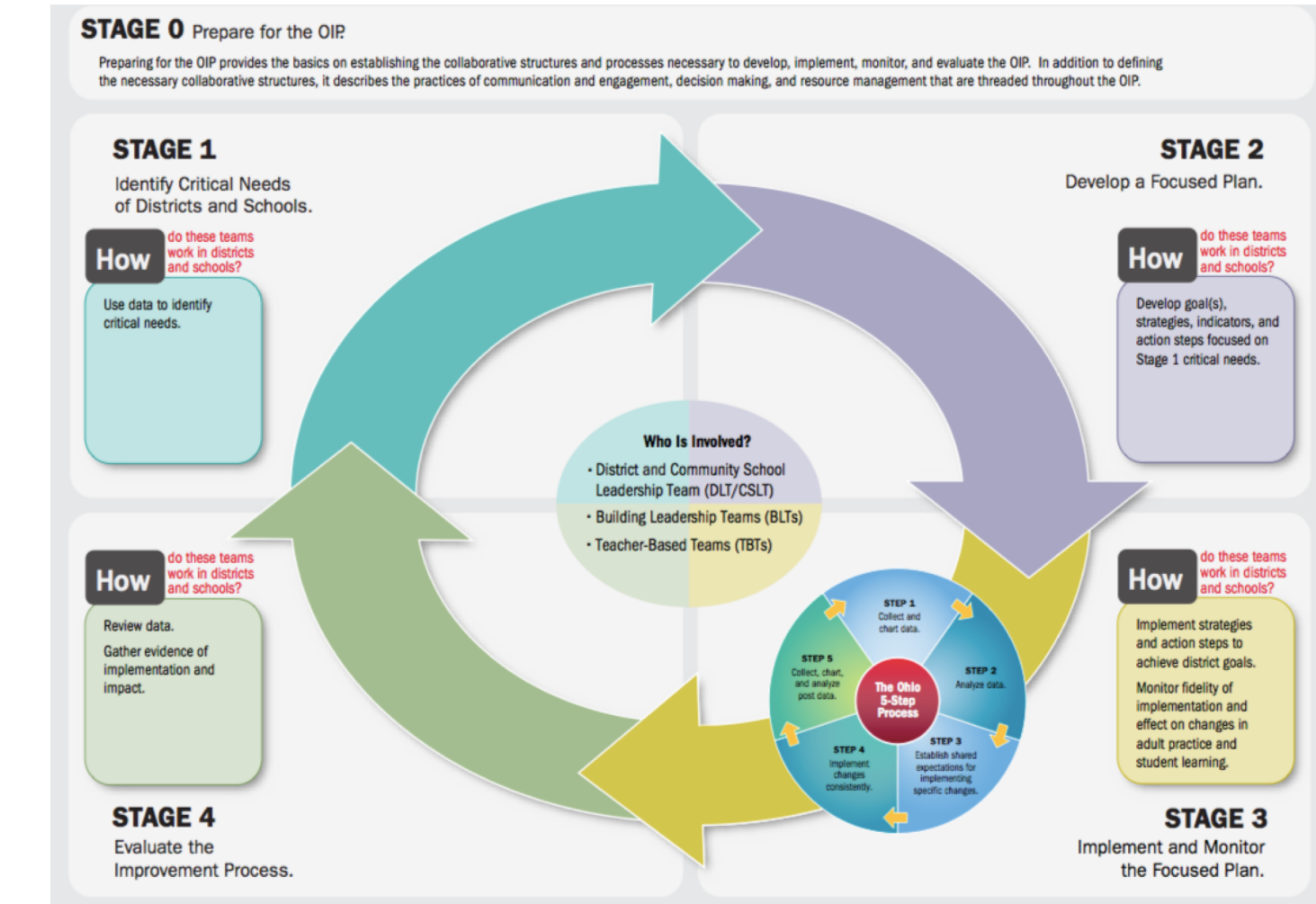
This project demonstrates a model of collaboration through participant expertise and situational knowledge, shared resources, and relational strength that exemplify collaborative research and relevant practice. This project was a school-university partnership based in mutual trust and stakeholder input. Bellefontaine City Schools and engaged in a seven month collaborative study using a needs assessment framework. Diverse perspectives on contextual data provided joint interpretation and ownership of the data. The collaborative action research project looked closely at teacher-based teams focused on professional development of curriculum and pedagogy knowledge and skills.

IMPLICATIONS

The relevancy of this work in the 21st century to the field of teacher research and practice is profound: a professional teacher work force of leaders and learners is essential to sustaining an informed and active citizenry.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

How can public PK-12 school districts engage with university researchers to direct school reform efforts? How can we collectively foster and sustain teachers’ professional learning with current educational research?



OIP Improvement Cycle.

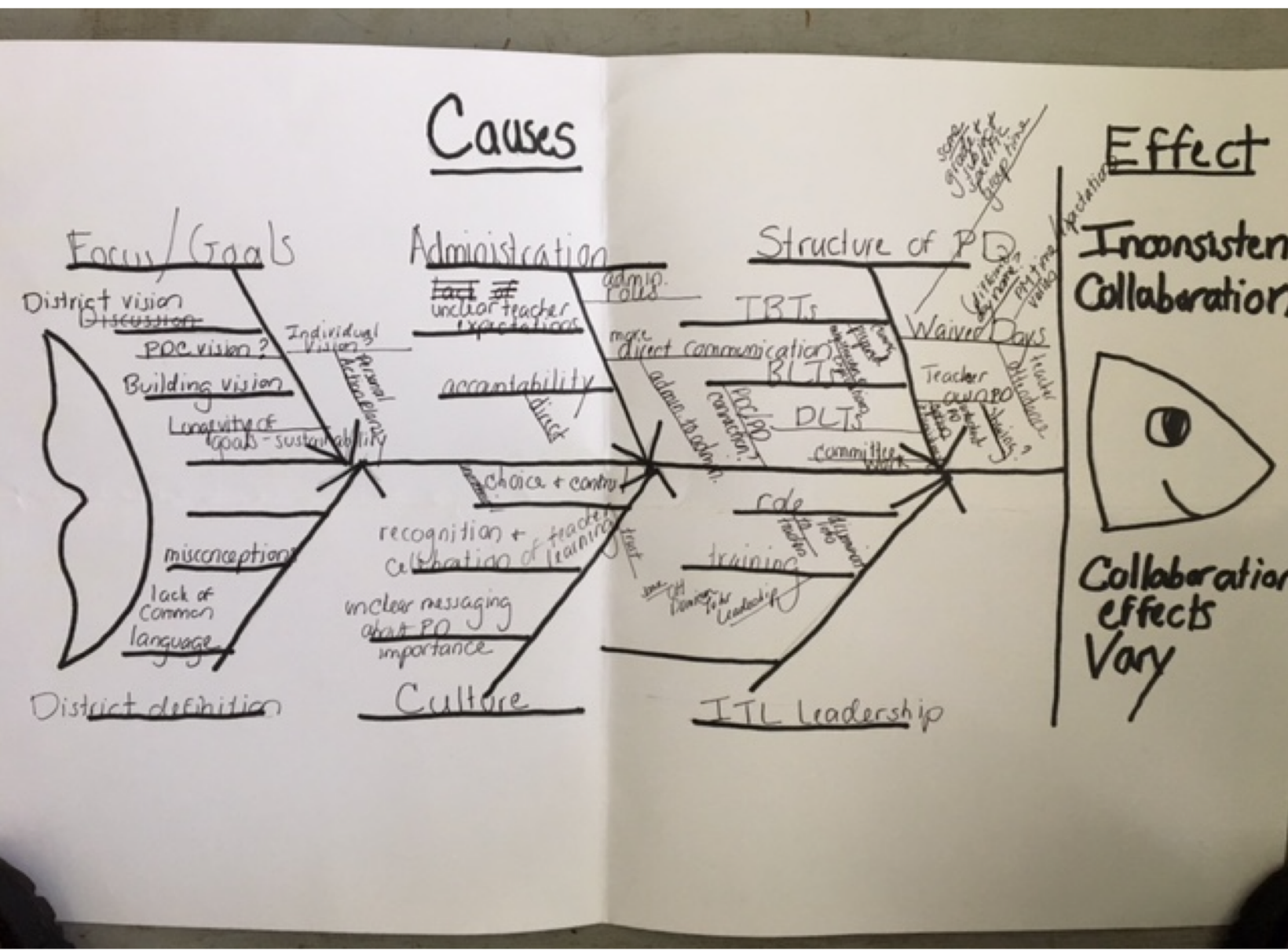
METHODS

- This study was conducted using a needs assessment for Bellefontaine City Schools to examine how teachers’ collaborative work in teacher teams is constructed in the district and how the district can further support teachers’ collaborative work in professional development for instructional improvement.
- The KIT needs assessment framework (Altschuld & Kumar, 2010) was used to inform engagement with district stakeholders throughout the needs assessment.
- As a part of the needs assessment, a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design was used to collect survey, interview, district documents, and observation data.
- Engagement with a stakeholder committee throughout the study was used to gain input and contextual perspective.
- Research in teacher collaboration provided a lens to analyze data using a constant comparative model that followed an iterative process between data collection, analysis, and member-checking.

DESIGN

- A stakeholder committee consisting of the doctoral candidate, the District’s instructional director, and four teacher leaders from each of the District’s school buildings met monthly to discuss research processes, data collection instruments, and contextual influences, as well as to analyze findings and provide feedback for data interpretation.
- This ultimately drove recommendations and action steps to improve the collaborative work of the teacher-based teams.
- Throughout the process the stakeholder committee aligned the study processes and findings close to the culture of the District and the context of their teaching and learning.
- The District research remained grounded in the relevancy of the teachers’ professional development work and the reality of the culture and values of the organization.
- Research-driven practices and methodologies informed the foundation, design and analysis of the data.
- Through sharing resources and expertise, joint accountability and data validity occurred using critical dialogue and member-checking.
- A trusting relationship based in mutual respect for stakeholders’ different perspectives and interpretations created joint ownership of the study and its findings.
- Collective work towards the doctoral candidate’s research and the District’s initiatives built a meaningful and sustainable partnership.

Sample of completed Fishbone Analysis



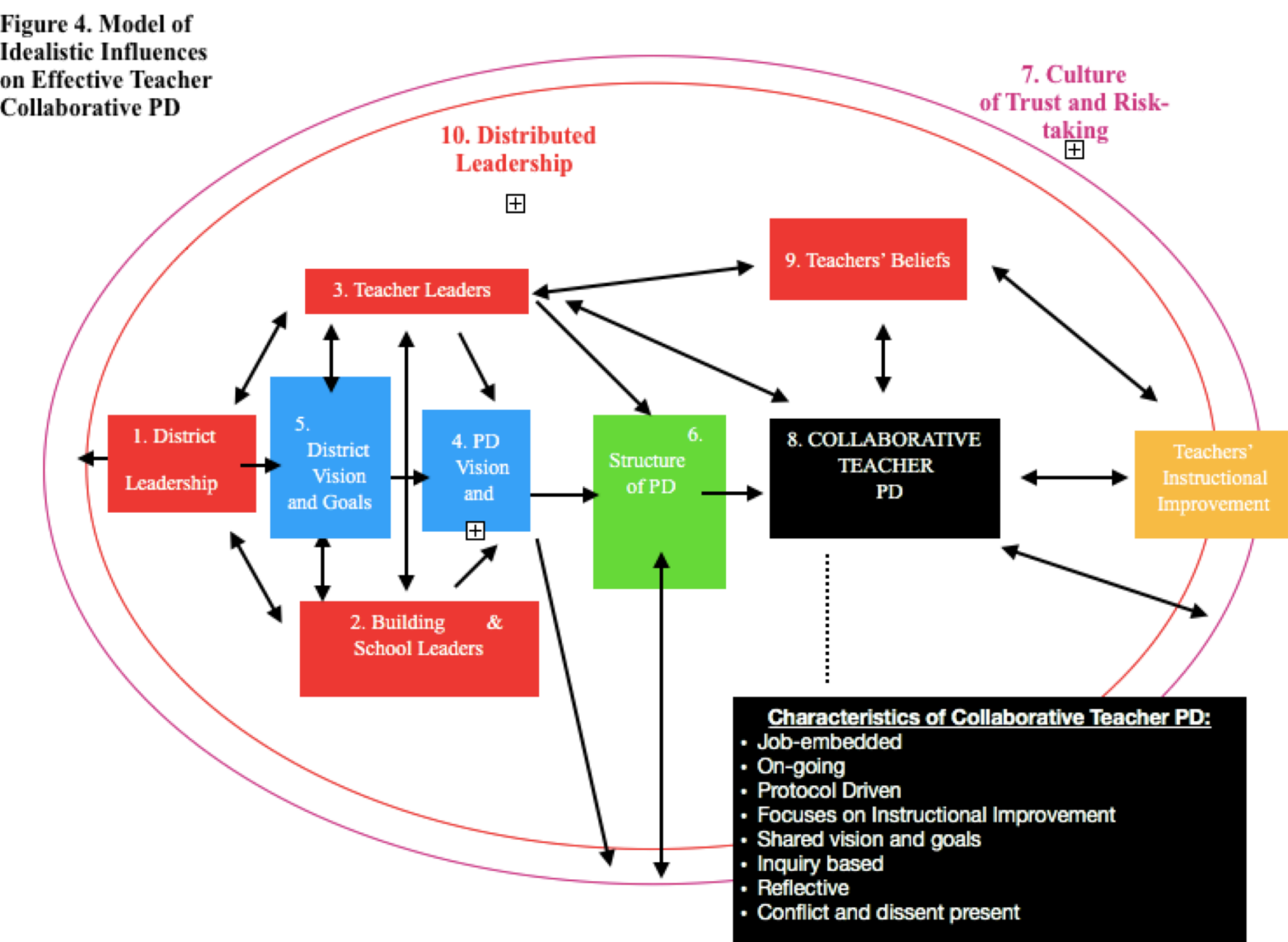
FINDINGS

Teachers in the District were given choice at several steps of the PDC work. This was well-received and empowered teachers. Perhaps because of the choice teachers were given in the *PD* topics, teacher buy-in to the new *PD* emerged as a recurring theme in the data

How is teacher collaboration in the technology PDC conceived and constructed in the District?

- there are varied definitions of collaboration without *clear goals* that link to other District and school goals around student achievement
 - it is enacted in various forms, but with certain components missing - e.g inquiry, clear vision and goals,
2. What is the perceived usefulness of teacher collaboration in the technology PDC?
- there is a shared understanding to its value and importance in the District
 - the *leadership (lack of clear communication)* and *structures* of the PDC do not support ideal conditions for collaboration - time and inquiry-based dialogue needed
3. How can the District further support teacher collaboration in the technology PDC?
- stronger culture that stems from district and teacher leadership

Model of Idealistic Influences on Effective Teacher Collaborative PD



CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATION	DATA SOURCES for Recommendation	LITERATURE SOURCES for Recommendation
Align the District's student achievement goals to the PD goals of the District, and the PDC goals, making this clear to all involved.	Surveys Interviews Field Observations Committee work	Achinstein, 2002 McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006 Vesio et al., 2008
Establish a common definition around what the District defines as Teacher Collaboration and the expectations around Teacher Collaboration in the PDC work. For example, Teacher collaboration is teachers using inquiry-based methods to collectively learn from each other.	Interviews Field Observations Committee work	Williams, Marie L, 2010 Dufour & Dufour, 1998
Clearly and directly communicate TLL job responsibilities and boundaries.	Interviews Field Observations Committee work	Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015 York-Barr & Duke, 2004
Establish clear and consistent communication paths between the leadership, teacher leaders, and the several collaborative teams in the District - DI, T, TLL, TLTs, PDCs.	Interviews Committee work	Quinn, 2002
Provide specific training focused on collaborative inquiry for the teachers and TLLs.	Interviews Field Observations Committee work	Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015 Wood, 2007
Make PD training opportunities provided by the District (either workshops, conferences, study groups" etc.) clear to all teachers.	Interviews Committee work	Mayrowetz, Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2007
Expand opportunities for teachers to become involved in teacher leadership roles through such PDC structures as teachers leading mini-workshops based off their area of knowledge. Establish teachers as "experts" in the buildings - peer observations, buddy/trio of support from others in same PDC in the building	Interviews Committee work	Lieberman & Miller, 2004
Shift the Structure of the PDC time on Waiver Days to provide more time for PDC work. E.g. move the building meetings to the afternoon time enabling three hours of PDC time in the morning of Waiver Days.	Surveys Interviews Field Observations Committee work	Vesio et al. 2008 Wood, 2007 Little, 2003

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to Dr. Anika Anthony for her doctoral advisement of the study.. Special thanks to the teachers and leaders of the Bellefontaine City Schools for their significant contributions to the study.